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ABSTRACT

The process of selecting a chief state school officer (CSSO) can be a significant means of allocating policymaking power in state educational governance. This paper examines the role of the chief state school officer and explains how that role is influenced by the selection process. Four selection models are described, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each: (1) the governor appoints the board of education, which appoints the CSSO; (2) the elected state board of education appoints the CSSO; (3) the governor appoints the state board of education and the CSSO is elected by the public; and (4) the governor appoints the state board of education and the CSSO. Accountability, the relationship of elected officials to the constituents and public bureaucracies to elected officials, varies for each model, as does policymaking power. Specific qualifications and responsibilities of the office are also described as well as the chief state school officer's relationship to other state policymakers. (Author/TE)

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MODELS FOR SELECTING CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

Policy Memo Series No. 1 March 1987

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MODELS FOR SELECTING CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

Policy Memo Series No. 1 March 1987

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Executive Summary

The chief state school officer (CSSO) historically has ensured adequate supervision and control of state funds for education and provided legislators with information on educational matters. The office originated in 1812 in New York and by 1900 all the states had similar offices. Most states established the office by constitutional provision and elected the official by popular vote. But the means of selection were not, and are not, consistent. The official title for the CSSO also has varied. But whatever the title, the CSSO serves four main functions--advisory, political, administrative, and policymaking.

Forty-four of the 50 states use one of four methods to select a chief officer. These are listed below along with the advantages and disadvantages of each.

MODEL ONE. The governor appoints the board of education, which appoints the chief state school officer. Advantages: The board feels it has a closer working relationship with the governor. The board can seek the most qualified candidate. The chief officer has a positive relationship with other state governance structures. Disadvantages: An incompetent board could select an incompetent chief officer. The board retains primary responsibility for policymaking activities.

MODEL TWO. The elected state board of education appoints the chief state school officer. Advantages: Qualifications for chief officer can be determined by the board through its selec-

tion process. The state board is more accountable to the public. Disadvantages: The disadvantages of this model are similar to those of Model One.

MODEL THREE. The governor appoints the state board of education and the chief state school officer is elected by the public. Advantages: The chief officer is perceived by state legislators as providing more useful and influential information than an appointed chief officer. In addition, the chief officer generally plays a greater policymaking role as a representative of the will of the voters. Disadvantages: The qualifications of the chief officer are more open to question. Some lack educational expertise and candidates cannot be selected from out-of-state. There are often problems between elected chief officers and the appointed board.

MODEL FOUR. The governor appoints the state board of education and the chief state school officer. Advantages: There is cohesive planning, administrative efficiency, and access to gubernatorial influence. Disadvantages: The governor is the focus of the educational accountability system.

Accountability, the relationship of elected officials to constituents and public bureaucracies to elected officials, varies for each model. However, accountability to the electorate can be achieved under any model through explicit laws or administrative rules. As with accountability, the allocation of policymaking power also varies by model. Not every model awards the CSSO equal prerogatives in policymaking and some models encourage a more balanced distribution of policymaking power.

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Foreword

Education has become a high priority on state political agendas. With increased legislative interest in education, it is important that schools' best interests are served by an effective, influential chief state school officer. If the chief state school officer is to have any significant effect in the policymaking arena, he or she must be able to influence the governor and the legislature. The chief officer's ability to influence policy is affected by how he or she is chosen for office.

The process of selecting a chief state school officer can be a significant means of allocating policymaking power in state educational governance. Whether the chief officer is elected to office or appointed by the governor or state board of education can determine his or her qualifications, relationship to the board, and sphere of influence. For example, a chief officer appointed by a board of education will have different interests and influence from an elected chief officer, who must answer to his or her constituents.

This paper examines the role of the chief state school officer and explains how that role is influenced by the selection process. Four selection models are described, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each. Specific qualifications and responsibilities of the office are also described as well as the chief state school officer's relationship to other state policymakers.

MODELS FOR SELECTING CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

Introduction

As the 1986 state elections showed, the issue of whether chief state school officers (CSSO) should be appointed or elected remains a subject of debate. The Kentucky ballot carried a referendum to amend the state constitution to allow the governor-appointed state board of education to appoint the state superintendent of public instruction. The majority of the voters (57%) rejected the amendment, leaving the state superintendent's office an elected one (Office of the Governor of Kentucky, personal communication, Nov. 5, 1986).

The selection of CSSOs must be viewed within the larger context of state level educational governance. Means of selection is one variable within a complex configuration of variables and is a significant determiner of a state's educational governance structure (Thompson, 1976). As Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) observed in their study of the governance structures of 12 states, "any structure tends to encourage some values and not others, and makes it easier for some actors, rather than others, to exert influence" (p. 432). Thompson (1976) has pointed out that the bases for social and political power include a number of factors, such as "powers of office, legality, and constitutionality" (p. 13). The means of selection and the powers of the office of the CSSO can be significant in the allocation of policymaking power in state educational governance.

This paper addresses the means of selection of CSSOs by comparing the various models of educational governance structures currently in use among the states and analyzing the potential impact that each model has on educational policy development and accountability for such policy. The term "model" is used throughout to refer to the simplified representations of formal governmental arrangements at the state level. "Governance" is used to refer to the function of making policy decisions as being distinct from the administration of such decisions (Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976).

The first section considers the history and functions of the office (the term "office" is used to designate both position and function of the CSSO). The second section provides an overview of four basic models for means of selection. As each model is analyzed, it is discussed in terms of the way in which the qualifications, responsibilities, and the relationship of the CSSO to other state policymakers are determined by that particular governance structure. In addition, the relative advantages and disadvantages of each model are considered.

The Office of Chief State School Officer

History of the Office

In 1812 New York was the first state to appoint a chief state school officer. The New York Act establishing the office specified a number of duties:

> . . . it shall be the duty of the superintendent aforesaid, to digest and prepare plans for the improvement and manage-

ment of the common school fund, and for the better organization of common schools; to prepare and report estimates and expenditures of the school monies, to superintend the collection thereof, to execute services relative to the sale of lands, which now or hereafter may be appropriate, as a permanent fund for the support of common schools, as may be by law required of him; to give information to the legislature respecting all matters referred to him by either branch thereof, or which will appertain to his office; and to generally perform all such services relative to the welfare of the schools as he shall be directed to perform. . . .

(Keesecker, 1950, p. 24)

According to one of the earliest studies of the office (Reeder, 1924), there was no precedent in America for chief state school officers prior to 1812. Even county and city superintendents did not exist at the time. Reeder concluded that as other states followed New York's example in appointing a chief school officer, the office was viewed primarily as a way to ensure adequate supervision and control of state funds for education and as a means of providing state legislatures with necessary information on educational matters.

Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan (1980) have attributed the development of the office to a broader trend during the last century toward "special government" for education (p. 64). During the period that states were appointing chief school officers, they were also establishing state boards of education. Again, New York is usually credited with being the first state to

establish this form of educational governance with the establishment of its Board of Regents in 1784.

By the end of the 1800s all the states in the union (44) had chief state school officers. The majority of these offices were established by a constitutional provision and were elected by popular vote (Harris, 1973). Will (1964) suggested that in this manner the states attempted to give the office both permanence and authority.

States, however, have not followed a consistent pattern in selecting CSSOs. For example, in Iowa, the status and/or means of selection of the chief officer has changed eight times since the establishment of the position in 1841. In 1842 the state legislature abolished the office; four years later it reinstated the position as an elected office with a three-year term. The office was again dissolved in 1858 but was reestablished in 1864 as an elected position with a two-year term. In 1913, the governor was given the power to appoint the CSSO; however, in 1917 the office again became an elected one. It remained elected until 1953, when the Iowa State Board of Education was given authority to appoint the chief officer (Knezevich, 1984). Recently, in 1985, this authority was given to the governor (Council of Chief State School Officer's [CSSOs], 1986).

While the Iowa case may not be typical, other states have also frequently changed their methods of selection. The national trend is toward selection by means of appointment by the state

board of education or the governor. Since 1950, the proportion of elected CSSOs has decreased from 60% to 30% in 1986.

Table 1
Means of Selection of CSSOs Across States
1950-1986

	Number and Percent of States					
	1950*		1972**		1986***	
Means of Selection	N	%	N	%	N	%
Partisan/Non-partisan Election	29	60	19	38	15	30
Appointed by State Board of Education	13	27	26	52	28	54
Appointed by Governor	6	13	5	10	7	16

* 48 states (Keesecker, 1950)
** 50 states (Harris, 1973)
*** 50 states (CSSOs, 1986)

Between 1972 and 1986, the number of CSSOs appointed by governors increased by 3, while the number appointed by state boards of education increased by 1. However, as shown by the Kentucky experience, not all states have been willing to give the governor the power of designating the CSSO, even if such power is mediated through a governor-appointed board.

States have differed in the specific title that has been conferred upon the chief school officer, as well as in their method of selection. In 1950, 27 states referred to their CSSOs as "Superintendents of Public Instruction;" 13 had "Commissioners

of Education;" 4 states used the term "Superintendent of Education;" 2 used "Superintendent of Schools;" 1 state used "Director of Education;" and 1 called its CSSO the "Superintendent of Free Schools" (Keesecker, 1950). In a 1974 survey of the states, Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) noted a trend to appoint the CSSO by the govenor with the title "Secretary of Education." Four states (Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, South Dakota, and Virginia) were identified as examples of this trend. More recent information, however, shows that the trend has not continued. Of the four states referred to by Campbell and Mazzoni, two (Massachusetts and South Dakota) now appoint the CSSO by the state board of education and only Pennsylvania refers to its chief officer as Secretary of Education (CSSOs, 1986).

Functions of the Office

While there is not complete agreement as to the specific functions of the chief state school officer, four general functions can be identified from the literature. These are: an advisory function, a political function, an administrative function, and a policymaking function.

The **advisory function** is most readily apparent in situations where the CSSO is appointed by the governor. According to John Pittenger, Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania from 1972 to 1977, this function may at times include advising the governor as to what ought to be done, as well as being willing to "take some of the flack that's involved" (Murphy, 1980, p. 117).

As an advisor, the CSSO, who has ready access to information and data gathered by the state department of education, is able to provide the governor with needed information on the condition and needs of the state's schools. In addition, the advisory function can also involve speaking on behalf of educational interests to the legislature (Flakus-Mosqueda, 1983). When the CSSO is appointed by the board of education, the CSSO generally advises the board.

The **political function** is often singled out for its significance when the CSSO is elected. However, regardless of means of selection, the office carries a political posture. Interviews with four former state chiefs conducted by Murphy (1980) highlighted a number of the political aspects of the office in their work with governors, legislatures, and education interest groups. Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) have observed that "political skills seem essential if the chief is to influence the governor and the legislature" (p. 271).

The **administrative function** of the CSSO is a primary one. Harris (1973) has noted:

> In most States, the chief state school officer serves as 1) the executive officer of the State board of education, 2) the administrative head of the State department of education, and 3) the chief administrative officer of the State for executing the laws, rules, and regulations relating to education which arise under the State constitution, State statutes, or policies of the State board of education. (p. 75)

Although the administrative function is common to all chief officers, Keesecker (1950) observed that the extent of their administrative powers varies. Officers who derive their powers directly from state constitutional or statutory provisions (rather than from state boards) generally have greater administrative powers. When the chief officer is appointed by a board, the CSSO is often viewed not as an administrator of state educational policy but as a manager whose function is primarily to contend with the intricacies of the state department of education (Flakus-Mosqueda, 1983). However, according to Campbell and Mazzoni (1976), whether the CSSO is elected or appointed, demonstrated organizational skills are necessary to facilitate the officer's determination of both the structure and operation of the department of education.

The **policymaking function** of the CSSO is sometimes disputed by strong supporters of state boards of education who argue that all policymaking should be a function of the board. Apker, for example, has stated:

> Whether the state chief school officer is elected by the people, appointed by the governor, or appointed by the state board, it is the board's responsibility to develop and adopt policy. It is the chief's responsibility to implement and administer policy. (Apker & Sandow, 1975, p. 93)

Nevertheless, in a survey of 12 states' CSSOs, Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) found "the almost unanimous self-perception of the CSSOs that they should be leading participants in the policy-making process" (p. 99). The researchers concluded that "whether

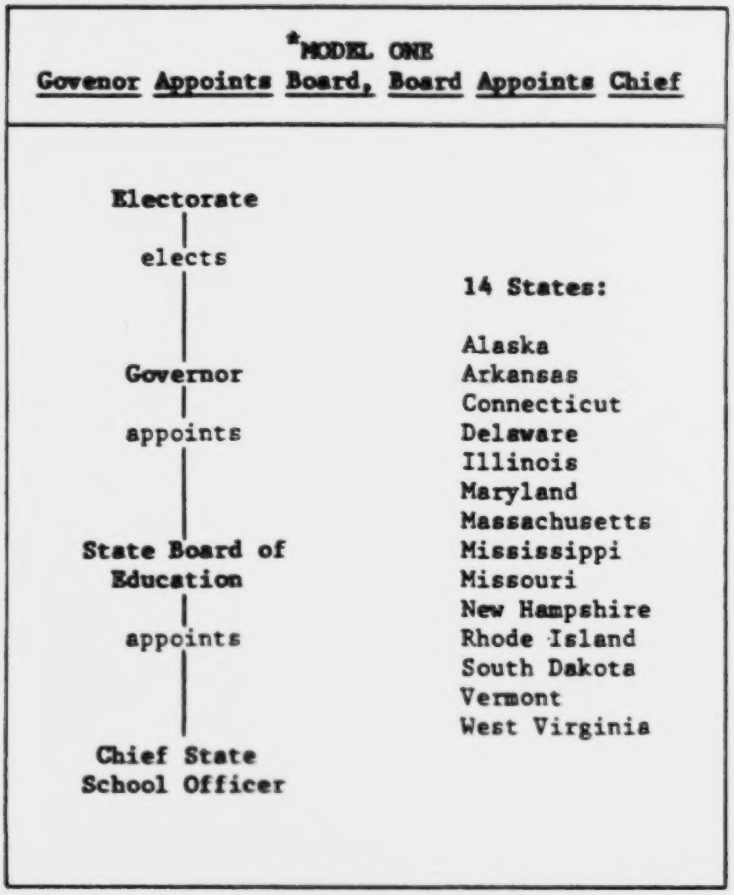
boards have much or little influence is not systematically related to the influence of the chief . . . both the board and the chief can have influence" (p. 124). They found no evidence that a strong board will have a weak chief or vice-versa. Flakus-Mosqueda (1983) has observed, however, that CSSOs are often restricted in their policymaking capacity by external factors such as "the strength of the legislature and the state board, the initiative and creativity of the governor, the political strength of various interest groups, and the nature of the state's economy" (p. 5).

Recent elections in many states have shown that education has become a key statewide issue and governors and legislators are becoming more visibly involved in educational policymaking. Rosenthal and Fuhrman (1981) pointed out that prior to the 1970s most state legislatures left educational policy issues primarily to state departments of education, teacher associations, local school boards, colleges and universities, and professional educators. By the end of the decade, however, many state legislatures had taken the initiative in educational policy formation "and most had started to exercise control over the design, funding, implementation, and assessment of education in their states" (p. 1). Therefore, Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) have argued that if CSSOs are to have any significant effect in the legislative policymaking arena, they must influence the governor or the legislature, and most often both.

Means of Selection

Although 10 distinct state educational governance patterns (see Appendix) have been identified (Wiley, 1983), 44 of the 50 states are represented by 4 of these. Wiley (1983) and Burnes, Palaich, McGuinness, and Flakus-Mosqueda (1983) have agreed on the four most commonly used patterns or educational governance models. This section considers these four models in terms of the way in which the qualifications, the responsibilities, and the relationship of the CSSO to other state policymakers are determined by the particular governance pattern. In addition, the relative advantages and disadvantages of each model are considered.

Model One. The largest number of states using any particular model is 14 (see p. 11). In these states the governor appoints the state board of education, and the board in turn appoints the chief state school officer. According to Wiley (1983), appointed boards tend to feel that they have a closer working relationship with the governor on educational matters. However, this contradicts an earlier finding by Campbell and Mazzoni (1976, p. 360) who reported that a greater percentage of elected (58%) than appointed board members (37%) indicated that they had a direct working relationship with the governor or his staff.



*The four models have been adapted from an Education Commission of the States publication, State Governance of Education: 1983, by D. Burnes, R. Palaich, A. McGuinnes, and P. Flakus-Mosqueda and revised according to more recent information.

Burnes et al. (1983) have observed that in Model One the governor seems to have a great deal of influence, but in fact, this influence is diffused as board members' terms are staggered and are generally longer than the governor's. Thus, a governor would not have the power to appoint a total new board.

Considered by some to be a positive aspect of Model One is the fact that the state board can seek the most qualified candidate (in or out-of-state) for the position of chief state school officer. The relationship of the CSSO to other state governance

structures in this model is also viewed positively by those who contend that the state board should have a strong policymaking function. According to Lewis (1983), this method of selection enables the board to "select its executive officer and hold him responsible for recommendations concerning policy alternatives and policy implementation" (p. 22). In addition, the policy-making function is lodged primarily in the state board and the chief officer is viewed more as an executive and administrative officer.

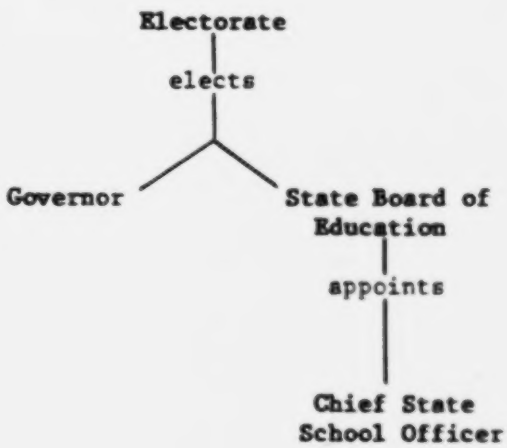
In a survey of state educational leaders, O'Shea (1976, p. 396) found that 28.5% (the highest percentage favoring any one model) of the 432 respondents preferred this model. In addition, he found that educational leaders were more satisfied with this model (76.3% indicated satisfaction) than with the other models being used (p. 405).

Among the disadvantages of this model is the possibility that an incompetent board could select an equally incompetent chief officer. It is also argued that a board-appointed CSSO is too far removed from the political processes of the state (Harris, 1973).

Model Two. In the second model, an elected state board appoints the CSSO. Eleven states operate within this governance pattern (see p. 13). Model Two has many of the same characteristics of the first model in terms of the relationship of the board to the CSSO and the fact that the qualifications of the CSSO can be determined by the state board through its selection procedures.

Model Two also ranked relatively high in O'Shea's (1976) survey of educational leaders' preferences of models (21.8% favored this model, p. 396). However, of those currently using this governance pattern, only 56.5% (compared to 76.3% for Model One) indicated satisfaction (p. 405).

MODEL TWO
Elected Board, Board Appoints Chief



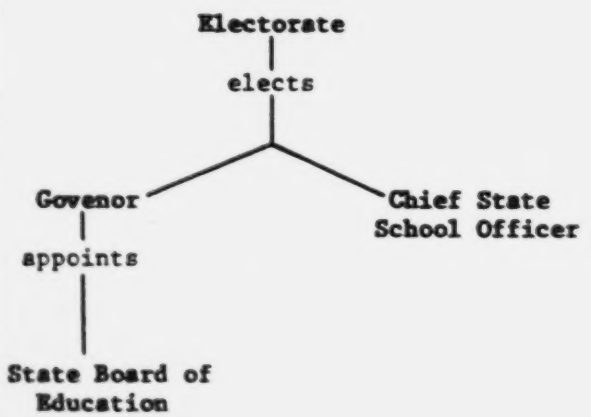
11 States:

Alabama
Colorado
Hawaii
Kansas
Michigan
Nebraska
Nevada
New Mexico
Ohio
Texas
Utah

Although the CSSO appears to serve primarily as an executive officer or administrator in this model, Wiley (1983) has noted that this situation may be modified in cases where legislatures have enacted laws authorizing the chief officer to recommend policies and propose a budget for the operation of the state department of education. One of the key factors in the effectiveness of both Models One and Two is the ability of the CSSO and the state board to work well together.

Model Three. Model Three consists of a governor-appointed state board of education and an elected CSSO. The CSSO is usually elected on a partisan ballot. Twelve states adhere to this model.

MODEL THREE
Appointed Board, Elected Chief



12 States:

Arizona
California
Georgia
Idaho
Indiana
Kentucky
Montana
North Carolina
North Dakota
Oklahoma
Oregon
Wyoming

In their survey of 12 states' educational governance models, Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) found that elected CSSOs were perceived by state legislators as providing them with more useful information than appointed CSSOs. Elected CSSOs were also seen as being more successful in getting their legislative programs enacted. Governors' offices, in general, perceived elected CSSOs as being more influential than their appointed counterparts.

Supportors of this model suggest that since the CSSO is elected by popular vote he or she can be more effective as an educational advocate. According to Wilson Riles of California

(a former elected CSSO), "[b]eing elected gives a man a constituency. When I talk to the governor, it's as a peer. I got 54% of the vote, just as he did--and he understands that. . . . And when I'm talking to legislators or appearing before legislative committees, they understand where I'm coming from" (Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976, p. 334). There is some sentiment that the elected CSSO has a greater policymaking role in educational governance. Proponents of this model also claim that partisan election usually provides the CSSO with party support on educational legislation and ensures more effective legislative action.

Opponents of Model Three argue, however, that qualifications of the chief school officer are more open to question when the office is an elected one as political savvy may play a larger role than educational expertise. In addition, candidates cannot be selected from out-of-state, which further limits the possibility of finding a chief officer with outstanding qualifications. It is also argued that the most qualified candidates may not want to submit to the rigors of political campaigning and would decline to run for office for this reason.

O'Shea's (1976) study of preferences among educational leaders showed this model to be the one most clearly rejected. Less than half (43.4%) of those currently following this pattern indicated satisfaction with this means of selection (p. 405). Wiley (1983) has observed that this model seems to establish two distinct sources of educational leadership: a) the CSSO elected by the people and b) the board of education appointed by the governor. In this situation board members may often observe

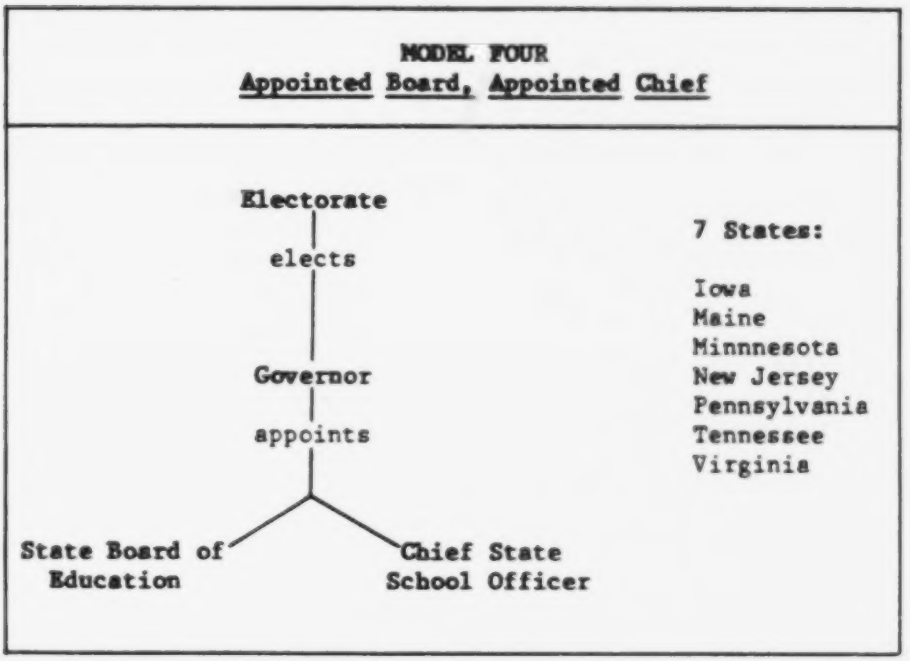
"that blame for ills in the state education system are often bounced back and forth between the governor and 'his' board, and the chief" (p. 25).

Nevertheless, the primary argument in support of a popularly elected CSSO is that the chief officer represents the will of the majority of the voters and will be responsive to them (Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976).

Model Four. In Model Four the governor appoints both the state board of education and the chief state school officer (see p. 17). Staggered and extended terms for the state board are one way in which the governor's power is tempered under this model. Model Four presumably does not limit the qualifications of the CSSO; however, it is unlikely that a governor would appoint someone from outside the state. Since this governance model is the most highly centralized, its proponents argue that it is more effective in achieving the goals of "accountability and responsiveness, comprehensive planning and decision making, administrative efficiency and access to gubernatorial influence" (Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976, p. 317).

O'Shea's (1976) survey of educational leaders, however, found that this model was given only slight preference (6.3%) among educational leaders (p. 496), and in those states currently using the model, only 46.3% were satisfied with the pattern (p. 405). Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) also found in their survey of educational leaders that there was little support for

making the governor the focus of an education accountability system. Other objections raised were the concern that governors would not act as "a public voice for education," but might be disinterested or even hostile; and that educational matters under such a model would become too "enmeshed in politics" (Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976, p. 319).



Summary

Harris (1973) has stated that "few, if any, objective measures of the relative merits of the . . . methods of selecting chief state school officers are possible" (p. 89). Accepting this caveat, some generalizations can be made regarding the relative advantages or disadvantages of each of the four governance models presented.

The most popular model is Model One in which the governor appoints the board of education and the board appoints the CSSO. The trend over the last thirty years (see Table 1, p. 5) has moved in the direction of this model. The most obvious advantage of this model is that the search for an appointed CSSO can be extended out-of-state (unless prohibited by state statute), and thus, the pool of qualified candidates can be greatly enlarged. Although some argue that the board retains primary responsibility for policymaking activities under this model, there is evidence that within this model both the board and CSSO can be equally involved in policy matters and that the role of the CSSO need not be a weak one.

Model Two is another popular pattern of selection for much the same reason as Model One. However, it has the additional advantage, according to its proponents, of being more accountable to the public since the members of the board of education are elected. Like Model One, the search for a CSSO with superior qualifications can be extended according to the board's discretion.

Although Model Three is waning in popularity and more states are moving away from elected CSSOs (see Table 1, p. 6), advocates contend that this model provides the CSSO with a greater advantage in terms of policy implementation through legislative and gubernatorial influence. The election process, however, necessarily precludes some candidates who may be highly qualified such as out-of-state candidates or those who are unwilling to be involved in campaigning.

Model Four, according to its advocates, provides the greatest advantage in terms of administration and coordination of state educational policy since these functions are centralized through a governor-appointed board and CSSO. The governor thus becomes the focus of policymaking through his or her appointive power, a fact that makes this model less popular with educational professionals.

Each of these four models can be considered in terms of accountability for educational policymaking. Assuming that accountability includes both the relationship of elected officials to constituents and the relationship of public bureaucracies to elected officials, each of the four models holds the CSSO and state board of education accountable in a different fashion. Models One and Four share the feature that the governor is the only official who is directly accountable to the electorate. In Model One, the board of education is directly accountable to the governor, while the CSSO is accountable to the board. In Model Four, both the board and the CSSO are directly accountable to the governor. Model Two holds the governor and the board

of education accountable to voters and the CSSO accountable to the board. In Model Three the governor and the CSSO are accountable through election, while the board of education is accountable to the governor through appointment. Under any of the four models, greater accountability to the electorate can be achieved through explicit laws or administrative rules defining the roles and responsibilities of the CSSO and members of the state board of education.

As was stated in the introduction, the means of selecting the chief state school officer can have a significant impact on the allocation of power to make policies in state educational governance. Thus, in considering any one particular model, the issue of allocation of policymaking power should be considered in addition to that of accountability. Not every model gives the CSSO equal discretion in policymaking. It is no easy task to reach a decision regarding the "best" model to suit any particular state's needs. However, it is possible to weigh the options provided by each model in terms of both advantages and disadvantages, accountability, and locus of policymaking power.

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Appendix

MEANS OF SELECTING CSSOs IN OTHER STATES

Florida	Board of Education and CSSO elected on a partisan ballot
Louisiana	Board of Education: 8 members elected 3 members appointed by Governor CSSO elected
New York	Board of Regents elected by State Legislature CSSO appointed by Board of Regents
South Carolina	Board of Education appointed by State Legislature CSSO elected
Washington	Board of Education elected by local school boards CSSO elected at large
Wisconsin	No State Board of Education CSSO elected

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